



View from the

Blackdown Hills

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Issue 85 January 2012

Wishing all our readers a very
HAPPY NEW YEAR

Two reserves chosen for 'reptile project'

THREE-YEAR PLAN THANKS TO £50K GRANT CASH

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TWO Blackdown Hills nature reserves have been selected for a project hoping to boost populations of reptiles and amphibians.

The project will run over three years at Ashculm Turbary and Lickham Common in the Blackdown Hills — and at Bovey Heathfield and Chudleigh Knighton Heath in the Bovey Basin — and started last month.

The project is being undertaken by Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT) thanks to a grant of almost £50,000 from Biffaward, a multi-million pound environment fund managed by the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT), which utilises landfill tax credits donated by Biffa Waste Services through the Landfill Communities Fund.

DWT was able to secure this grant thanks to generous donations from The Marjorie and Geoffrey Jones Charitable Trust and Sibelco UK.

The programme of work will help reptiles and amphibians animals by restoring lowland heathland habitat and enhancing existing areas.

Along with this work, ponds, egg-laying heaps and hibernacula for hibernation will be created for a variety of species including adders, great crested newts and grass snakes.

Andy Bakere, DWT's nature reserves co-ordinator in the south of the county, said: "Reptiles and amphibians are particularly vulnerable and in decline which is largely due to the loss of lowland heathland.

"This is the only habitat which supports all six native species of reptiles, so by targeting work in these areas there is a good chance of boosting populations of these interesting creatures.

"This project would not have been able to progress without the generous funding from DWT Corporate Supporters, Sibelco UK, who stepped in at the last minute to help release the grant."

Anyone wishing to support this important project by volunteering should visit www.devonwildlifetrust.org or call 01392 279244.

**The Hills
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What's on in the area
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Pulman's View from Ottery St Mary
Pulman's View from Crewkerne
View from the Blackdown Hills*

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Builders grow for Movember cancer charity



◆ P H Hardwill's Movember team with prize winners holding their certificates. From left, Roy Down (Best on Show), Luke Hardwill (Dirtlip award), George Holland (Most Disturbing) and Bill Studley (Most Fitting)

THE 11th calendar month has, in recent years, come to be known as Movember, with men across the globe growing moustaches to help raise awareness for the Prostrate Cancer Charity, the

Institute of Cancer Research and the Movember Foundation.

Local steel stockholders and building contractors P H Hardwill, of Beaminster, rose to the challenge with 18 of its staff growing

moustaches and raising over £300 for the Prostrate Cancer Charity.

Over 37,000 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer every year. For more information about the charity call 0800 074 8383 or visit www.prostrate-cancer.org.uk.

Conservation help sought

AN innovative partnership between Neroche Forestry Commission, the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Natural England, entitled Beef,

Butterflies and Trees, is seeking tenders to help conservation.

Working on the two-year contracts will mean collaborating closely with farming and woodland communities in the Blackdown Hills and east

Devon to conserve and manage marshy pastures, heaths and small woodlands. For more details visit www.nerochescheme.org and follow the Tender Invitation link under News.

Useful contacts

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WORKING OUR WOODLANDS

Blackdown and East Devon Woodland Association with John Greenshields

I HOPE you all had a great Christmas, we had all the family around, with kids everywhere, too much to eat and drink, but its only once a year!

I think it is very important to introduce children to the outdoors and woodland especially. In the Blackdowns we have a very strong 'forest school' group, which allows children into the woods safely.

The Blackdown Hills AONB invited some French delegates from the agricultural and forestry ministries and they met at my place.

This meeting was part of a 'cordiale' project to swap and learn how both countries operate their forestry systems, and practices.

The French, of course, on the whole coppice their hedges, where as we mostly lay ours. I think the main reason for that is that we have a lot of double hedge banks especially here in the Blackdowns.

Data recorded by the Woodland Trust suggests that our native trees are reacting to climate change by ripening their fruit some 18 days earlier, compared to 10 years ago.

Professor Tim Sparks (advisor to the Trust), said: "There is a suggestion that the average ripening dates have some correlation with mean temperatures recorded for April, so we presume that the link is through earlier flowering leading to earlier ripening."

I have certainly noticed this in hazel and crab apple this year, so much so that I nearly missed our normal crab apple crop.

Of course, this has huge repercussions for wildlife because the fruit, if early, will not last as long into the winter. I am not sure this phenomenon is just due to climate change, I think it has as much to do with a water shortage (which of course could itself be caused by climate change). The plants, I believe, because they sense less water in the summer, flower early to make sure they can produce fruit before the winter.

It was plant-a-tree week at the beginning of December and we planted 16 oak trees in our parish and helped two schools plant some apple trees. I heard that a parish in Dorset had planted two hundred that week — good on them.

The Blackdown and East Devon Woodland Association is holding a grade and measurement course for valuing living trees and timber in February. This course should be valuable to woodland owners with respect to getting the best out of their timber. Visit www.woodbiz.co.uk for information.

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Neil says energy policies could be a 'grave threat'

MP for Tiverton and Honiton and Member of the Wood Panel Industry All-Party Parliamentary Group Neil Parish has met with managing director of the international forest products company, Norbord, Karl Morris, to support the Stop Burning Our Trees campaign.

At the event, held in the House of Commons on November 22nd, Neil Parish said that the Government's energy policies could result in a rise in wood prices.

He said: "This is a grave threat to the 2,220 people who are employed in primary production and processing and the 15,000 green jobs supported by the forestry sector in the south west."

Norbord's wood panel plant at South Molton currently provides work for 400 people.

The Stop Burning Our Trees Campaign is also concerned that the Government's green policies could increase CO2 emissions but admits that burning wood as a source of fuel is greener than coal in the long term.

Currently, the campaign aims to collect 100,000 signatures to have the matter debated in the House of Commons under the Government's e-petition initiative.



◆ FROM left, Steve Roebuck (Norbord), Neil Parish MP, Karl Morris (Norbord)

Storyteller seeking enchanting tales of the hills for sharing

STORYTELLER Clare Viner is hunting for material to craft a set of enchanting stories based around the Blackdown and Quantock Hills.

For the project, locals are being asked to remember folklore, legends and real-life stories to add to a new book of tales.

Clare has been gathering and telling local stories for several years and hopes to capture them in print so they can be passed on to new generations.

Clare said: "I'd love to hear from anyone who can tell me a tale from the Blackdowns, whether it's a complete story or a fragment, or even just an interesting saying."

"It could be an ancient myth, or it might be something remembered from more recently."

"It could be magical or down-to-earth, funny or serious, long or short. I'm looking forward to hearing them all."

The book will include a map to show where the stories take place and will be available from local bookshops when complete.

Contact Clare with your stories on 01395 577016 or, alternatively, email clareviner@googlemail.com.

Silver prize delights self catering owners

HEMBURY Court, Broadhembury, has won a silver award at this year's Devon Tourism Awards in a ceremony hosted by Judi Spiers, of BBC Radio Devon, at Sandy Park, Exeter, on Thursday, November 23rd.

The awards are a competition which aims to promote and celebrate the cream of the Devon tourism industry.

This year's awards ceremony saw 13 gold awards and 15 gold product awards presented across 10 categories.

Hembury Court owners Robert and Mandy Persey were delighted to be recognised in The Self Catering Establishment of the Year category saying: "We are very happy to be given this award for the second year running and we hope it will help bring more people to Hembury Court and to Devon." Further commenting that the ceremony itself was exceedingly entertaining.

For more information on Hembury Court's self-catered holiday cottages visit www.hemburycourt.co.uk.

Hotel inspector awards Monkton Court with AA rosette duo

THE Monkton Court Hotel, restaurant and bar, near Honiton, has been awarded national recognition for its à la carte menu with two AA rosettes following a recent inspection.

A hotel inspector said in his report: "The

meal sampled impressed on a number of levels with technicality, balance and flavour definition all commensurate with a new award of two rosettes."

He added that Monkton's head chef, Joe Nagy, cooked with "great sensitivity".

Owner Jennifer Wheatley-Brown

remarked that her head chef deserved the recognition he has received, saying: "He's worked so hard and is very talented with such flair and passion in the kitchen." Adding that more people should "come and see what we've got to offer".

The Monkton Court Hotel restaurant

will also double as a live music venue on Friday, December 23rd.

The restaurant serves locally-sourced produce and seasonal ingredients in the evening from Tuesday to Saturday, with two courses costing £26.50 and three courses £34.

Dairy scoops tasty award

A DAIRY business based in Monkton, near Honiton, has just scooped a prestigious award at this year's Taste of the West Awards.

Otter Valley Dairy picked up the gong in the Best Ice Cream and Sorbet of the Year category.

This award completes a successful year for the ice cream makers who have previously won gold at Taste of the West and also two gold stars at the

Great Taste Awards.

Rebecca Bond, a partner at the dairy, said: "It was a lovely surprise, we are so very proud of our achievement as a small family business in only our second year."

Otter Valley Dairy will be open in the run up to Christmas and will be selling pots of ice cream from their new festive range.

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The festive faces of children
across the Blackdown Hills in
their school nativity plays...

LITTLE ANGELS

PHOTOS BY COLIN BOWERMAN



◆ THE pupils at Stockland Primary School put on their Christmas production, Tinsel and Tea Towels, in the parish church. The youngsters sing one of the songs, left. Above, the trio of Christmas trees in the show.

Left, the shepherds follow the star in the sky.

Below, a group of angels.

Below left, a group of Awliscombe Primary School angels

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LITTLE ANGELS

The festive faces of children
across the Blackdown Hills in
their school nativity plays...



◆ ABOVE, Upottery Primary School pupils perform their nativity play. Children from Awliscombe Primary School are pictured during the dress rehearsal of their Christmas production, The Three Kings, which they put on in the parish church next to the school. Below, Joseph and Mary in the stable



◆ THE three kings arrive with their gifts during Awliscombe Primary School's Christmas production

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countrysceneextra

Written by countryside
correspondent
TONY JACKSON



BIRD REMARKS STRIKE CHORD

MY recent remarks on the disappearance of garden bird life and the steady increase in predators such as grey squirrels, magpies and sparrowhawks, seems to have struck a chord amongst a great many readers.

Emails and letters have made it clear that there is deep concern over the loss and disappearance of so much of the wild life we have, hitherto, almost taken for granted. On my own patch we have only sparrows, the odd blue tit, a robin and a blackbird.

Amongst my correspondents is Bill Short, a retired farmer from Aston, near Axminster, and who reminds me that decades ago many bird species which were so plentiful in the 1950 and '60s have now vanished or are in decline. Predators were then far fewer in numbers and under the control of the much larger workforce on the land. "The

countryside", he writes," although still green and pretty is in deep trouble, largely of our own making. Sparrowhawks and badgers were protected by law and now we are over-run by them".

On his farm, until about 1990, bird life and other creatures such as hedgehogs, slow worms, snakes, bumblebees and butterflies sustained their numbers while magpies and crows were rigorously kept down. Now, he writes, the past five years have seen all-round declines and it has become a national problem but still does not seem to sink in!

Another reader, Maggie Wright, has had a squirrel trap installed and while grey squirrels are still seen occasionally, their numbers have been greatly reduced. Control she says, which simply means killing, is something country-bred people take in their stride but some folk can't understand the reasoning behind it.

Margery Robinson who lives in Whitford notes that blue tits have almost vanished and whilst stag beetles used to appear at dusk in the summer they are now never seen. Even worm casts on the lawn have vanished and this year house flies were barely in evidence, though she is not deploring their absence.

However, on a slightly more upbeat note, Mr R. Whittington from Curry Mallet tells me that he has two clusters of ladybirds in a corner between a wall and ceiling and which have been there for nearly four weeks. This is the first time he has ever seen this phenomenon. Hopefully, they are not harlequin ladybirds, the aliens from the Continent which are spreading rapidly and destroying native ladybirds.

■ Are you a cyclist looking for a new challenge? If so, I'm told that eight new bike rides offering challenging climbs, heart-stopping

descents and wonderful views have been created in the Blackdown Hills. All the routes, accompanied by maps and a year-round calendar of countryside events can be found at www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk.

If, however, bird-watching is more your thing, then how about a new series of wildlife weekends with the experts on Brownsea Island? This is, I gather, the first time that residential wildlife courses have been offered at The Villa, the Dorset Wildlife Trust's HQ on the Island's nature reserve. The first course will be concerned with winter waders from January 27th to 29th when the Island is closed to the public and a time when the lagoon is alive with wading birds. Currently there are around 1,200 avocets on the reserve, as well as hundreds of black-tailed godwits and up to 15 spoonbills as well as other waders, all of which can be observed from the four hides. Red squirrels and water voles are

also on the agenda. The cost of the weekend is £220 and includes accommodation, food, guides and boat transport. To book, go to www.kingcombeccentre.org or ring 01300 320684.

Letters from readers supporting my comments about the decline in garden birds over recent years keep landing on my desk. Mrs Dorothy Thomas, of Honiton, tells me that she has fed birds in her garden for 60 years and noted the steady decline in numbers. She attributes the loss, not only to sparrowhawks and cats, but also the use of slug pellets, dirty bird feeders and this year's cold spring.

Of Dalwood, Ken West has observed a marked fall in the number of house martins returning each year to nest. For years he had at least six pairs nesting at his cottage, but for the last two years not a single bird has turned up. He believes the loss of these martins can be attributed to peregrines and greater spotted woodpeckers. He has, he writes, seen peregrines plucking martins out of the air. I suspect, however, that the falcon he has seen taking martins is a hobby, the highly agile little falcon which, in appearance, resembles a miniature peregrine. Woodpeckers he notes, hang on to the martins' nest and drill in to them to snatch the chicks. On the other hand, sparrows are thriving in the Dalwood area and also have been seen pulling martin chicks from their nests.

On the other side of the coin, Don Walker tells me that he has had a colony of around 20 sparrows for six years, until three weeks ago when

they suddenly disappeared, with only the odd one returning to the bird table. He has seen no sign of sparrowhawks and there are few cats, so why have they vanished he asks? Frankly, I don't know. Perhaps they have found another bird feeder more to their liking. I suspect, however, that they will return in the fullness of time.

Meanwhile, the dozens of windfalls from my apple tree are providing a feast for blackbirds and even redwings, though the latter which have recently arrived, seem to prefer the mass of berries which are providing a blaze of scarlet on the holly trees. Woodpigeon, too, are clambering round the trees, stuffing their crops with the berries, hundreds of which now lie scattered on the ground.

Woodcock have started to arrive in the West Country and only last week I saw several whilst picking-up with my Labradors on a local shoot. These handsome waders tend to keep ahead of cold, bitter weather, and their increasing numbers may be a reflection of the wintry conditions in the north and east. The western parts of the country usually offer a haven for 'cock as they seek soft, unfrozen ground in their hunt for worms and other invertebrates.

To contact Tony Jackson, write to: Country Scene, South Street, Axminster, Devon EX13 5AD or by email to: wardjackson@tiscali.co.uk

The views expressed are those of the columnist and not necessarily of the newspaper.

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Culmstock Calendar Girls raise funds for Devon Air Ambulance - as well as eyebrows!!!



A group of twelve ladies from the Blackdown's are raising a few eyebrows as well as much needed funds for The Devon Air Ambulance Trust, a charity close to their hearts. 'The Culmstock Calendar Girls' were formed by a group of friends enjoying a few drinks one evening in their local pub 'The Culm Valley Inn'.

The Calendar will be officially launched at a party at 2pm on Saturday the 27th of August at the Culm Valley Inn, Culmstock. On the day guests will have the opportunity to meet the girls and the photographer as well as the rest of the team. Supporters will also have a chance to purchase signed copies of the calendar.

Since its initial concept a mere six months ago the calendar for 2012 has been catapulted into a reality with assistance from the much admired photographer Rob Stopford. Rob has created a series of shots encapsulating the individuals take on rural life with an artistic and moody edge. The pictures reflect the girls varied lifestyles and interests in an array of scenes ranging from snow boarding and belly dancing through to spring flowers, shooting and fast cars.

Rob explained "What fun working with these great girls. Our Saturdays will never be the same again! I just hope all our work brings in as much as possible for the Devon Air Ambulance Trust"

The calendar has also been made possible with help from a number of local individuals and businesses including James Townsend Ltd who have very generously printed a thousand copies of the calendar at no cost. Copies of the A3 calendar hit the shelves soon in a number of local retail outlets for the very reasonable price of £9.99. It's hoped that the unlikely stars will raise a significant amount for The Devon Air Ambulance Trust.

"Everyone involved has worked so hard over the last six months and we have achieved something that is artistic, edgy and that we are truly proud of. We hope that sales of our calendar will make as much money for the Devon Air Ambulance Trust as possible. The Air Ambulance is such a crucial life line for anybody living and working in Devon, making it a really worthwhile cause to support".

We would like to thank everyone who has been involved especially our sponsors who have made all this possible. We hope you enjoy watching 2012 unfold through our calendar as much as we enjoyed making it"

The Culmstock Calendar Girls

Further information regarding stockists and orders will be available soon via the Culmstock Calendars Girls Facebook pages.

PHOTO BY DEBORAH JOHNSON



◆ PEOPLE of all ages came along to enjoy the festive atmosphere when Chard's Christmas lights were switched on on Saturday, November 26th.

Left, from left, friends Shauna Eveleigh, Sadie Tillotson and one-year-old niece Rihanna Garrett, Jade Wharton, Jennifer Lewis and Laura Watts enjoy the fun.

Below left, from left, Leah, five, and dad Michael Hooper, Scott Gallina and daughter Kaysie, five, enjoy the atmosphere.

Below, Robin Teague and Monica Edwards with their stall, Santa's Secrets, at Chard Guildhall Christmas craft fair



YOUR PAPER FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

Get in touch with the news team at
blackdown@tindlenews.co.uk



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Join John on journey

FREE Leisure Review Diary Dates listing form

Date
 Event
 Time
 Venue
 Town/Village
 Organised by Tel no

Send your Diary Dates to:

View from the Blackdown Hills, Tindle House, South Street, Axminster, Devon EX13 5AD or email blackdown@tindlenews.co.uk.

Please note: This is a free service and whilst we endeavour to include all entries, we cannot guarantee all listings submitted will be published. Please use one form per event.

WE ARE UNABLE TO TAKE DIARY DATES LISTINGS OR QUERIES OVER THE PHONE
 Deadline for Diary Dates entries is on Fridays at 12 noon

BLACKDOWN Hills farmer of over 40 years John Carter has invited readers of his new book to accompany him as he recounts his family's journey into farming.

From evacuee to farming pioneer and National Chairman of the Institute of Agricultural Management, John has produced a written memoir of his life and agricultural life on the Blackdown Hills which charts the role played by farming in the wider community, be it rural or urban.

The 480-page book includes sketches by Dawn Carter and Jan Aisley and a foreword by agriculturalists Prof Tony Giles OBE and Prof Malcolm Stansfield MBE.

Now available from Curious Otter, Ottery St Mary; The Bookshop, Bridport; and Wellington Bookshop, Somerset for £18.50. For a signed copy, send a cheque for £20 by post to Smokey House Publications, Yarcombe, Honiton, Devon EX14 9AD.

For more information on John's writing visit www.johnrcarterfarmingauthor.co.uk.

Coastal voices call

LIGHTHOUSE Arts Centre in Poole is looking for singers to take part in its Coastal Voices project.

The project aims to give "new voice to 95 miles of Devon and Dorset coastline" as part of the Cultural Olympiad leading up to the 2012 Olympic Games.

Coastal Voices will be performing, among other things, Sturztrom; a piece composed by Marc Yeats specifically for east Devon. Yeats's music has been performed around the world by musical ensembles including the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra.

The first workshop for Coastal Voices took place at Belmont Chapel in Exeter on Saturday, November 12th between 10am and 12.30pm.

For more information contact Kate Burrough, project manager at info@coastalvoices.co.uk or call 07967 622680.

Diary dates

Wednesday, January 11th

HONITON: U3A lecture Water Aid — clean water to developing nations by Neil Whiter. 2.15pm at the Turks Head Lodge. For further details phone 01404 20823160

Saturday, January 14th

DUNKESWELL: Farmers Market at Throgmorton Community Hall 10am — midday. Local produce, plants, crafts and gifts. Refreshments available

Every Thursday

CHARD: Zumba at The Guildhall, Chard. It's a combination of exciting unique latin moves and rhythms. It gives you a fun-based fitness workout. From 7.30pm until 8.30pm. For more information phone 07738 014409 or email zumbasom@hotmail.com.

CHARD: Chard Guildhall Antiques and Collectors Fair from 8 am. Free admission and a thriving fair with a good mix of regular and casual stallholders. Offering a fantastic range of good quality products. New stallholders always welcome. Contact 01460 239567 for more information.

Every Tuesday

CHARD: Slimming World at The Guildhall, Chard. Morning sessions at 9.30am and 11.30am. Please phone Jenny on 01460 61786. Evening sessions at 5.30pm and 7.30pm. Please phone Charlie on 07790935647.

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Valentines Menu



Starter

- Chef's Homemade Soup of the Day
- Smoked Duck Breast & Cranberry Salad, Port Reduction
- Prawn & Asparagus Salad, Lime & Coriander Mayonnaise
- Sesame Crusted Goats Cheese, Mango & cumin Chutney

Main Course

- Slow Roasted Devon Beef Bourginon, Horseradish Mash
- Grilled Fillets of Sea Bass, Leek & Ginger Potato Cake, Chervil Sauce
- Oven-roasted Chicken Breast, Oven-roasted

Vine Tomatoes

- Sage & Onion Mash, Chicken Jus
- Roasted Butternut Squash Risotto & Spinach Crepe

Desserts

- Passion Fruit & Mascarpone Torte, Berry Compote
- Strawberry & Vanilla Tart, Clotted Cream
- Chocolate fondue with Fruit & Marshmallows
- Cheese & Biscuits

Three Courses
£19.95 per person

bhba Blackdown Hills Business Association



Want to grow your business?
Need any business advice?
Want to start a business?
Fancy a chance to start Networking?

You are invited to attend 'In Business' at Bicton College on Thursday, 8th March between 4 and 8pm

The event will be: **informative, as presentations will provide you with tips on a range of support including: how you can better manage your business in terms of your finances, web presence and recruitment in the current challenging trading conditions.

*BHBA members and East Devon Chamber businesses will have the opportunity to have a stand at the EXPO for just £40 (this will include refreshments). Your business will get links on various websites including the BHBA website and the Association of East Devon Chambers of Commerce website. Your business will also be featured in press releases issued locally and regionally and will be included in communications by Bicton College who are in contact with around 30 feeder schools.

*We are delighted to have already heard from a number of businesses who are keen to take part and will be posting their details in the coming weeks.

FORMAT

4pm: Doors Open

5pm to 6pm: Tips and advice from various businesses offering support.

More details to follow.

6pm to 8pm: Networking and Expo

8pm: Close

You are welcome to attend even if you are just at the idea stage of setting up in business and would like advice on how to go about starting up.

Space in the Expo will be limited, so you will have to be quick!

www.bhba.org.uk

4pm to 8pm: Refreshments - Bar and Buffet available

FREE entry or stands from £40

Please let us know if you plan to attend this event by contacting Val Baker at the BHBA - 01823 681 484 or info@bhba.org.uk

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www.lakeviewmanor.co.uk

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DAY CENTRE****The Cameo Club is held in the
Blackdown Healthy Living Centre.**
For further information contact
Anne Monk on: 01823 680687
or email: anne.monk@tbhlc.org.ukOur motivated, caring & trained
staff aim to provide mental,
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A Power Plate® machine delivers
a fully body workout in just
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each week are enough to see
real results, making it a fast and
effective way to shape up for your
year ahead. And it's available right
in the heart of the Blackdowns.*

Clinical research also indicates regular
use of the machine is an excellent way
to improve bone density.
This is especially beneficial to post-
menopausal women who are prone
to developing brittle bones.



It is hoped that establishing the machine in
a private room will encourage less confident
women to take advantage of the benefits.

The Blackdown Healthy Living Centre is
a charitable company based in Hemyock,
on the site of the old milk factory.

Established to promote health and well-being
in our community, the centre offers a wide
range of activities for all ages and conditions.

Unlimited use Power Plate® membership is
available now at The Blackdown Healthy
Living Centre at £22.50 per month. Please
call **01823 680687** for more details.

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& high blood pressure.For further information contact
Anne Monk on: 01823 680687 or
email: anne.monk@tbhlc.org.uk



IS posting another cheque to charity really how you want to help others? Or could you do more? And is sending another group of your employees on a jolly in the Brecon Beacons really the best way to help.

Are your people reaching their full potential?

If you suspect this is not the case you'll like Outer Limits Explore's hands-on approach to helping others while building your own personal development and sense of achievement and enhancing your company's corporate responsibility goals.

Outer Limits Explore are launching a new and unique initiative to give direct help to communities in the developing world. Working closely with local communities in Tanzania and Peru they have developed a programme where you and a group of friends or work colleagues can give direct, hands-on help to those most in need.

Benefits for you:

- It's a powerful and inspiring experience that truly challenges and motivates individuals – the changes you'll experience are profound and long lasting.

- The experience will broaden your horizons, bringing a greater understanding on issues relating to poverty, development and the environment, as well as learning important lessons about yourself, effective

Outer Limits can make a real difference to people's lives

teamwork, decision-making and using your initiative to best advantage for all.

- Raising the money for materials prior to departure gives an added dimension to the project and involves everyone right from the start.

Benefits for your company:

- Your organisation benefits directly from the personal and team development that occurs – people are empowered and motivated to do a better job for

you on their return.

- Acts as an excellent staff incentive and shows everyone that you are thinking creatively about how best to develop their full potential.

- This hands-on approach is more effective and thoughtful than merely sending another cheque – it demonstrates the company not only takes its responsibilities seriously but is a truly progressive and enlightened corporate

citizen.

Benefits for the community:

- It's a "hand up", not just a "hand-out". By going in person you bring hope, skills and expertise that will serve those communities well for years to come.

- In many instances the local government will support your efforts – for example, in Tanzania once the classroom is built the government will provide the teacher and once the surgery is completed they'll provide the medical staff.

So a relatively short intervention can have a huge long-term impact.

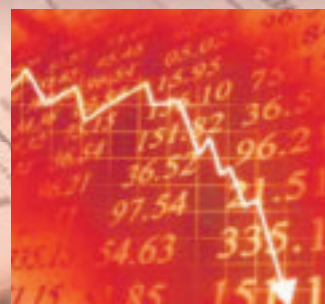
- By providing money, materials, energy and management expertise your people act as a powerful catalyst in the local community and economy.

If you'd like further information on how these schemes can be tailored to your individual corporate requirements please contact us on 0845 300 8512, email us at info@outerlimitsexplore.co.uk, or visit www.outerlimitsexplore.co.uk

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Resolve to be more ethical!



THE New Year is both a time for reflecting on events across 2011 whilst looking forward to the exciting things that 2012 might bring. But what makes up a good New Year's Resolution?

Before you follow the crowds and rush out to join a gym, this year you might want to consider looking at how the things you choose to eat can impact our planet.

Small changes can make a huge impact across the year and certainly are easier to stick with than promising yourself to look like Arnold Schwarzenegger by the end of the year!

A new fast growing website, Ethical Community launched last year which aims to help us all purchase eco-friendly and natural products, direct from the people that make them.

Natural food lovers can browse from over 7,000 products, learn about the story and person behind each product, so we decided to quiz them on their top eco food resolutions.

Don't waste a meal

With the UK throwing away an astonishing 3.6 million tons of food each year maybe its about time we all pledged not to waste a meal and to make our ingredients go that little further, such as making delicious stock [http://www.ethicalcommunity.com/ethical-living/Food-and-drink/How-to-Make-Chicken-Stock-From-Leftover-Food] and gravy from left over food.



THE PRINCESS ROYAL SPORTS COMPLEX

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Looking Forward to the Delights of the Garden in February and March

By February the promise of spring is with us, with the emergence of snowdrops, crocus and the anticipation of daffodils. However, there are trees that provide both a backdrop to spring bulbs and a floral accompaniment to them. The stems of birches (*Betula* spp.), Tibetan Cherry (*Prunus serrula*) and Paper Bark Maple (*Acer griseum*) light up in low watery sunlight at this time of year. In contrast late winter/early spring flower is provided by the pale pink or white blossom of oriental cherry species such as *Prunus subhirtella* 'Autumnalis' and *Prunus incisa* 'Praecox' or the bright yellow flowers of Cornelian Cherry *Cornus mas*.

These aren't the sort of plants you can usually just pick up at a garden centre. It is best to go to a specialist tree grower, such as Thornhayes Nursery, who can offer sound advice and quality plants, based on years of experience and growing.



BRING YOUR CREATIVITY TO LIFE



APPLICATIONS STILL BEING ACCEPTED
(deadline Friday 20th January 2012)

to attend the two-day Entry Workshop (1st/2nd Feb)
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- A 21st Century Performing Arts Course
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**Blackdown Hills
Business Association**

BHBA's Spicy Start to the New Year!

Wednesday, 18th January 2012

6 for 6.30pm at the Viceroy, Dunkeswell

£20 per head (booking essential through Val Baker at the BHBA)

Menu

Indian Cuisine & Networking £20pp at the Viceroy! ... 18th January 2012

Come along to the BHBA's first networking event for the New Year. You will be able to network with local businesses at this award winning restaurant (County Champions for the South West in the Spice Times Awards 2011).

Poppadoms, Chutneys and Pickles

Mixed Platter of Starters to Share

Buffet-Style Main Courses including:

Muglai Chicken
Chicken Tikka Makhani
Devil's Tamarind Lamb
Mixed Vegetable Chaat

All these dishes will be served with Rice and Naan Bread

Coffee & Mints

Time: 6 for 6.30pm

Refreshments: 4 Course Dinner

Cost: £20

Contact Name: Val Baker

Contact Details:
01823 681 484 or info@bhba.org.uk

Viceroy

Indian Cuisine - Fine Dining Experience

www.viceroyindianrestaurant.co.uk • www.signatureviceroyoutsidecatering.co.uk

HIDDEN deep in the Blackdown Hills this restaurant is a true gem, waiting to be discovered and then frequently revisited by guests local to the community and also from much further afield.

Established since 2009, recently refurbished and decorated with rich vibrant colors complemented by contemporary

decor, the Viceroy Indian Restaurant open for lunches and evening meals prides itself in serving the very best Indian cuisine.

What's so special about the Viceroy Indian Restaurant?

Best Indian Restaurant in Somerset and Dorset at the British Curry Awards 2011!

Situated in the unlikely location of an industrial estate in Dunkeswell, the restaurant offers an interesting and unique fusion of modern and traditional award winning recipes for both Indian and English dishes.

The restaurant's core values - quality, choice and atmosphere - are always maintained offering simple, uncomplicated food that is full of flavour, honest, wholesome and satisfying. All ingredients are fresh, using the finest produce and wherever possible local suppliers.

All dishes are made to order and nothing is served to you that has not been personally prepared for you.

The menu and specials are constantly evolving, often updated to reflect seasonal produce. The menus offer something for everyone welcoming all guests including those with specific dietary requirements.

Viceroy Indian Restaurant care about your dining experience and offer great food, great service and great value along with a warm friendly welcome.



Life in the Hills...



What's the Neroche Scheme?

THE Neroche Scheme is a diverse conservation, access, community and skills programme running from Autumn 2006 to September 2011.

The Scheme was awarded a total of £2 million by the Heritage Lottery Fund, which taken with match funding from partners has provided a total Landscape Partnership Fund of £2.95 million.

The Scheme is governed by a Partnership Board comprising of key partners and members of a Local Stakeholders Group. Delivery of the Scheme was led by a core team of seven staff employed by the Forestry Commission who are based with the Blackdown Hills AONB in Henstree.

The Neroche Scheme encompasses a total of 25 separate projects whose collective aims are:

- To invest in the natural, built and cultural heritage of the area.
- To make the landscape more accessible to everyone.

- To improve people's ability to sustain the qualities of the landscape.

Although currently funded only until 2011, the Neroche Partnership is looking to the future and is developing proposals to sustain its activities and impact. To find out more about Neroche projects please visit the Neroche Projects webpage.

Neroche Landscape

The Neroche Scheme covers 35 square miles of the northern part of the Blackdown Hills AONB, spanning the border of Somerset and Devon, close to Taunton. The area is characterised by a low range of hills up to 275 metres, with a pastoral landscape of small livestock farms, and a large public forest estate.

Volunteering

The Neroche Conservation Volunteers group is a dynamic group which meet together twice a month to carry out practical activities in the forest. We usually meet on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month, and occasionally on a Saturday.

The tasks change throughout the year, and

may involve tackling the spread of Himalayan Balsam growing at Castle Neroche, trail maintenance along the Staple Fitzpaine Heronpath or coppicing of Witch Lozes.

In the spring and summer of 2011 we are embarking on a new project in Young Wood near Staple Fitzpaine - establishing a site for woodland activities such as bushcraft and woodcarving. We will be establishing a compost toilet and some kind of natural shelter. This area has potential for community involvement and the re-establishment of overwooded coppicing for firewood.

Volunteering is a great way to become involved in the Neroche project, and help shape your local landscape. Come and meet like-minded people, and learn a new skill!

All tools are provided - no experience necessary. Hot drinks provided - please bring your own lunch. We regret we cannot accept children under 10 for these practical events.

For more information about the scheme please visit www.nerochescheme.org



nerocha liberating the landscape **TREE PLANTING WORKSHOP**

11th January

A practical day of every aspect of tree planting to include guards, types of trees, soil effects, timing, spacing, breeding, transplanting, undercutting, seeds and more.

To include a light lunch

Further details at www.woodbiz.co.uk

YOUNG WOOD VOLUNTEERING **Wednesday 25th - Friday 27th January**

A series of coppicing days at our new community woodland centre at Young Wood, coppicing hazel and ash to generate firewood, improve habitats for wildlife and lay the foundations for traditional management of this woodland into the future. Also some construction work on facilities for the woodland workshop site.

All tools and instruction provided.

Further details at

www.nerochescheme.org/volunteering.php

Local Produce Markets

Blackdown Hills
Taunton Town Centre
4th Saturday of Month
Val Baker
Tel: 01823 681484
Mobile: 07711366885

Taunton Farmers Market
Every Thursday 9am to 3pm in the High Street

Dunkeswell Farmers Market
2nd Saturday of each month at Throgmorton Hall
10 am - midday

Wellington Farmers Market
1st & 3rd Saturday in Castle Hall 9am-1pm

Yarcombe Village Market
2nd Saturday
10am to 12 noon in Village Hall

Hemyock
Heather Stallard
3rd Sat of Month
Tel: 01823 680237

Stockland
Last or 5th Sat of month
Monica Paris
Tel: 01404 881 535

Churchinford
1st Sat of Month
Nick Strange
Tel: 01823 601565

Add your local market to our list!
email: rose.siwek@findlenews.co.uk

January Events with the AONB

07 Jan 12
Yarcombe/Stockland area

Hedge laying day course
Learn the traditional skill of hedge laying with experienced instructors from the Blackdown Hills Hedge Laying Association
9.30am - 4pm Cost: £30

07 Jan 12
Yarcombe/Stockland area

Hedge laying improvers course
A course for those who have previously attended the Blackdown Hills Hedge Association's day course (above), and would now like to improve their skills
9.30am - 4pm Cost: £30

11 Jan 12
Varies by month - see Neroche website for details
Neroche Conservation Volunteers

A practical volunteering day in the fresh air. Tasks vary through the year and include scrub cutting and path maintenance, all designed to help wildlife and keep areas accessible.
9.30am - 3pm Cost: Free.

11 Jan 12
Park Farm, Wellington

Tree planting workshop
A practical day of every aspect of tree planting to include guards, types of trees, soil effects, timing, spacing, breeding, transplanting, undercutting, seeds and more.
9.30am - 3.30pm Cost: £40 per person (£15 to members) to include a light lunch.

14 Jan 12
Mount Fancy Farm
Butterfly Conservation work party

Take part in habitat management on this Butterfly Conservation reserve for the conservation of threatened plants and animals such as small pearl-bordered fritillary and wood white.
10am - 4pm Cost: Free

22 Jan 12
Membury village hall
Winter Walk - Membury area

A 10km/6 mile walk from Membury which starts by going through Furley Cross and Challenger Cross, on to Holy City, Chardstock, Reads Hill Farm and Twist, returning

via Brinscome Copse and the Iron Age hill fort of Membury Castle.
Cost: Free 10am - 2pm



25 Jan 12
Young Wood, Staple Fitzpaine
Neroche Conservation Volunteers at Young Wood

A day at our new community woodland centre at Young Wood, coppicing hazel and ash to generate firewood, improve habitats for wildlife and lay the foundations for traditional management of this woodland into the future.
9.30am - 3.00pm Cost: Free

29 Jan 12
Culm Davy
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In these challenging economic times it is always good to hear about a local company enjoying some success, right in the heart of the Blackdown's. First Four OffRoad Ltd have been trading for 10 years, 5 of those have been from their base on the Flightway Business Park at Dunkeswell.

First Four supply parts and accessories for the Land Rover range of vehicles. The core of their product range is still centred on their own 'Shadow' range of replacement winch bumpers, winch systems and off-road protection equipment. They supply to both the retail and wholesale markets both in the UK and across the world. Although quite a small business with just 4 people, they punch well above their weight in terms of product range and distribution reach. Most of their sales are through their website (www.firstfour.co.uk). But they also receive business through the Land Rover magazines. The majority of orders are dispatched by mail order, but the number of calling customers to their trade counter is steadily increasing. The business was started 10 years ago by husband and wife team Peter & Rose Lamb. Peter was working as an off-road driving instructor until the business he worked for was hit by the 2001 foot & mouth movement restrictions, and they had to downsize. This coincided with Rose also being made

redundant after 12 years with an American agricultural supplies company. It was Peter's engineering background that led to the development of their initial range of vehicle equipment.

Wherever possible, First Four prefer to supply British-manufactured products. Rose Lamb, says "as Land Rover is such a strong British brand icon, owners tend to be loyal to that ideal, and prefer to use British-built equipment and accessories. International customers especially, like to associate themselves to the British-built concept. They both feel strongly that in the current economic climate supporting British industry and jobs is more important than ever. The vast majority of our products are made right here in Devon". They use a range of local engineering companies to supply products made to their designs.

The range of equipment available from First Four is huge. Whether you simply need a vehicle service kit, or perhaps a good quality tow rope to keep in your car as a bad-weather contingency, or maybe you are kitting-out your Land Rover for a round the world expedition and need items such as a roof rack and roof tent, First Four can advise you and supply the equipment you need.

They also supply equipment to the emergency services, such

as the RNLI, Coastguard Agency and Mountain Rescue organisations. Other customers include sections of the military and MOD agencies, public authorities and utilities. It is the military connections that led to them recently helping two charities. *Project Mobility* help recently disabled ex-servicemen and women get back behind the wheel. First Four supplied winch & bumper systems so that the injured soldiers could participate in off-road driving events as part of their rehabilitation. Another project involved *BLESMA* (*British Limbless ex-servicemens Association*), this was to help kit-out a Land Rover Discovery which was being driven by an amputee Ex-Soldier who was driving to 14 capital cities in 14 days as a charity fundraiser. Peter said that they were very pleased to be able to help such a worthwhile cause. "We have been privileged and humbled to meet some of the guys that have gone through unimaginable suffering in recent times but still have amazing positivity. If we can assist these guys in some small way we are more than happy to do it when we can."

If you need any parts or accessories for your Land Rover, why not give First Four a call, the number is **01404 891 121**. The website is www.firstfour.co.uk.

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Refined fun



HONDA caused a stir when it launched its previous generation Civic. To say it was a radical departure from the norm is something of an understatement. Aimed at attracting younger drivers to the brand, its radical appearance went some way to helping Honda towards its goal.

What we have now is Honda's ninth generation Civic, a car packing greater levels of refinement and comfort while also delivering a driving experience that should please those seeking a bit of fun from their daily commute. In diesel form the car is also considerably cleaner, and if you haven't already noticed it's visually a little less in your face.

This Civic's overall stance might be similar to the previous car, but it's been softened slightly fore and aft. A black centre section replaces the glossy nose of old, while at the back the design of the car's light bar has been toned down plus its been repositioned as part of tailgate redesign to boost rearward visibility. And there's now a rear wiper - proof that Honda does listen to customer feedback.

Overall, though, the Civic retains its athletic-looking profile. The glass area has been reduced to exaggerate the car's 'sporty' character along with the inclusion of the steeply raked windscreen.

The sporty theme continues inside, with the driver's environment divided into an almost wrap around section including the main instruments and gearlever, making you feel like you're in the cockpit of a racing car. The rest - high level digital speedometer, audio unit, climate controls - are above and to the left respectively where you'd expect them.

Unusually for a car in this class, cabin space is also good. It's often a compromise - good up front but only fine for children in the back - but Honda touts the Civic as having 'class leading' cabin space and adult-friendly rear legroom.

Furthermore, the Civic's load carrying abilities are no less impressive. There's a 'second trunk' compartment in the boot floor for your valuables, plus with 477 litres and 1,378 litres available with the rear seats up and folded flat respectively, the new Civic follows in the footsteps of the smaller Jazz with its above average carrying capacity.

And like the Jazz, the Civic comes with 'magic seats'. These rear seats not only fold flat but, as part of the 60:40 split arrangement, they can be folded upright to reveal a



further load option for tall items. In a few quick moves both the seat back and cushion can be locked out of the way to accommodate Aunt Ethel's large pot plant.

Honda isn't just satisfied appealing to our practical side, though. The Civic's three engines - two petrol, one diesel - have been revamped to deliver more savings at the pump and when paying the tax man. In manual transmission guise they all get the now expected engine stop-start feature for good measure. A five-speed auto option is available for the 1.8 petrol Civic.

Petrol power remains the dominant option in the Civic line-up, and the car's 1.4 (100bhp) and 1.8 (142bhp) units deliver smooth performance and meaningful economy savings. CO2 is down for both and the 1.8 gains a fraction more power. The latter is a particularly smooth and willing unit, too.

The big changes have been reserved for the 2.2-litre diesel engine, which has gained 10 more horsepower (now 150bhp) yet dropped 24g to register 110g/km CO2 and is now EU5 rated. This is obviously a big deal, and with such tax-friendly credentials the car is now a more attractive proposition for company car drivers.

For all the changes, has Honda succeeded in rounding off

the Civic's quirky corners? By and large, yes. On the road the car's new electric power steering has been cleverly calibrated to deliver a good balance of weight and feel. The redesigned manual gearshift is more accurate and requires less effort. Forward visibility is good - the view rear is better.

The car's general ride is on the firm side of supple. It's clearly biased towards reducing pitch and roll in the corners but the strut front and rear beam axle set-up has been honed to deliver an impressively sophisticated ride on even the worst urban roads. The diesel Civic is most obviously a motorway mile-muncher and will be a boon for business drivers, while the 1.8 petrol variant feels lighter on its feet and a fun steer on twisty roads.

With four trim levels boasting generous levels of kit, a cabin delivering a high quality ambience and above average levels of space and a flexible load carrying capacity that's hard to beat elsewhere, Honda's attention to detail should be commended. Style-wise this Civic is less polarising and its on road performance is more rounded and mature. It's still fun, though. In fact, with the improvements to its engine range it could now be described as good clean fun.

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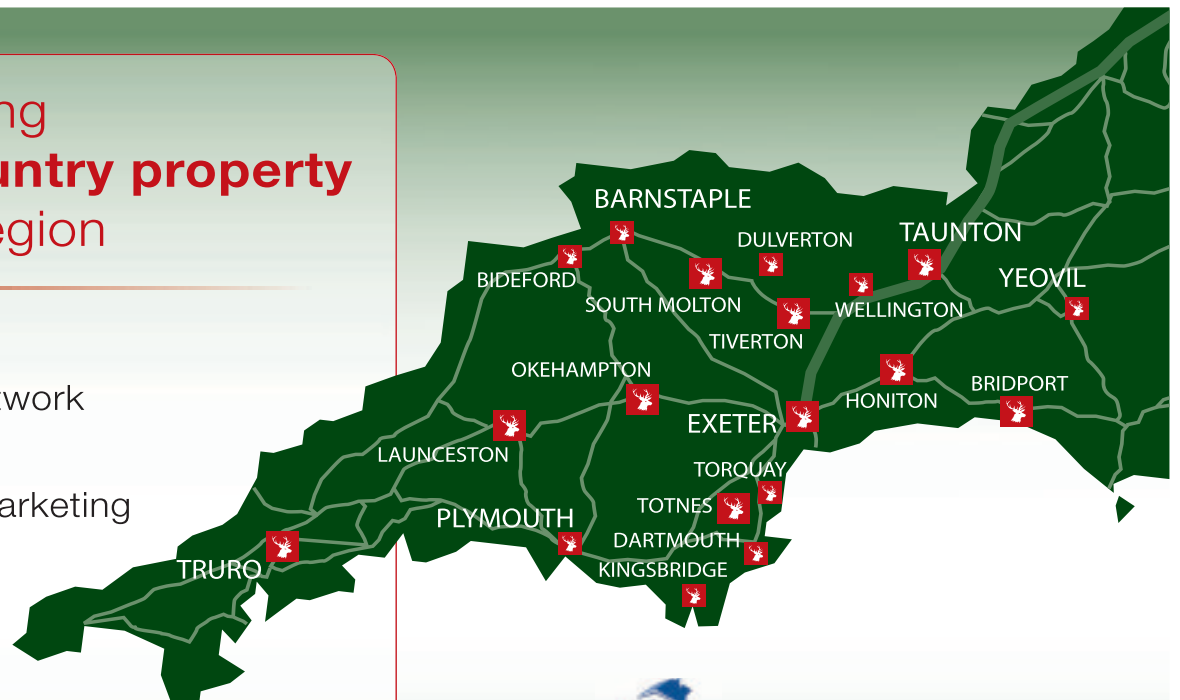
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